Meanwhile in Ballymena - Holy Relics

Housing Executive workers 13+ weeks on strike!

Health workers strike ballot

BLACK STAR

Vote to

SELF-DESTRUCT

An inability of the politicians up at Stormont to agree on how best to shaft the rest of us has led yet again to stalemate in the political system.

The state is being run (if that's the right word) by officials at the Northern Ireland Office who have decided to threaten the population with another election if they (the politicians) don't stop blaming each other and get back to what the earlier election this year saw them elected for. That was implementing Tory Government policies whilst whining about it in between scoring sectarian points in the wider war of identity politics. Was there ever a better advertisement for the absolute useless and disempowering process of bourgeois 'democracy'?

It's now more than likely that there will be an election called, perhaps even before this edition of Black Star comes out. Both British and Irish nationalists are currently upping the ante, one group of patriots threatening to attack visiting Free State officials, with clearly no capacity to do so, and the others pushing for the Dublin government of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Greens to join up with the Tory government in London and run this place.

‘UCU is Rising’ Apparently

Fresh from the most recent round of lecturers’ strikes earlier this year and last, the University and College Lecturers’ Union (UCU), are set to strike again. Led by a balloting campaign that started months before the ballot called ‘UCU IS RISING’, apparently inspired by James Connolly (for Catholic martyrs, see *Meanwhile… in Ballymena* column), the eventual result was over 80% in favour of strike action across two separate votes on pay and pensions. The ballot was the first ‘aggregated’ one in a number of years, the union previously adopting a ‘disaggregated’ vote meaning that each university had to reach a 50% turnout. This was blamed on Britain’s anti-trade union laws but the strategy actually played into those laws by organising ballots in this way in the first place. All the while, here in the North, there was no specific rule which applied on having a 50% turnout whether the vote was aggregated or not, as long as a majority of members balloted voted in favour of action.

This recent vote, like the last (disaggregated) one, is ostensibly about pay, though pensions for the posh universities is still in the driving seat, and is being trumpeted by the union bosses as akin to the RMT and CWU national votes, with Mick Lynch seen as the inspiration for others to follow. Indeed, there’s been an incredible lot of bollocks written about the three ‘Irish’ leaders, Lynch, and the two Gradys - Frances, the TUC chief, and Jo of the UCU, and their Connollyite politics. Not only has it taken more than a decade of austerity to wake these fuckers up to workers having had enough, but now we have to listen to their faux Maoist slogans and ridiculous posture ‘leading’ workers steadily towards the inevitable sell-out. It’s high time we exposed and ditched these posing bastards for a democratic and militant worker-led revolutionary unionism that disposes of the entire capitalist system that sustains them.

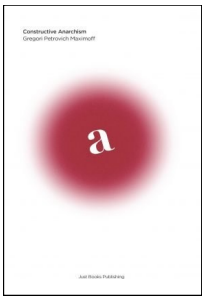
CWU leadership ‘bottle it’

In the face of threats to the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of striking postal workers and a legal challenge from a Royal Mail management intent on driving down wages and terms and conditions CWU union bosses called off 6 days of strike action.

This undoubtedly gave management a green light to announce a two tier workforce, other sweeping attacks to terms and conditions, Sunday working and with plans to close mail centres across the UK. Strikes were called off for 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10 November to concentrate on talks with the Royal Mail bosses at ACAS! CWU ‘leaders’ have ditched strike action and thousands of workers to negotiate from a position of weakness. First Royalist bollox and now ineptitude (at least) will not win against a management intent on fucking over posties. Isn’t it time the actual workers took the lead and joined up with the other disputes that are growing (often despite the ‘leadership’ of the Trade Unions) to effectively counter the current onslaught?

Just Books Publishing

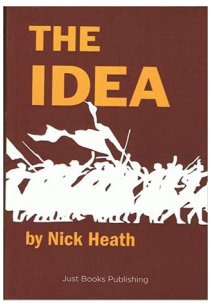
Just Books Publishing, recently set up by the Just Books Collective (an integral part of the work of Organise!), has successfully released its first two titles.



The first is a reprint of Gregori Maximoff’s *Constructive Anarchism*, to mark the 100th year of existence of the International Workers Association (IWA) the Anarcho-Syndicalist international founded in Berlin in 1922.

isbn 9781739723705

£11.99



The second title is Nick Heath’s *The Idea. Anarchist Communism: Past, Present and Future* - a welcome and new comprehensive work on anarchist communism, this book seeks to rehabilitate the current of anarchist-communism. To make it better known and understood.

...a good substantial book, and much needed. Lucidly written, it provides a rich brew of engaging discussions of the ‘Idea’ (anarchist communism as a political philosophy), interesting vignettes of many individual anarchists, and a great historical account of the many anarchist communist organisations over the past 150 years…
*(*Brian Morris on *The Idea)*

isbn 9781739723712

£18.99

https://organiseanarchistsireland.com/shop/

Health Workers announce Strike Action

SUPPORT NI NURSES
PAY PARITY
One nurse makes all the difference.
But Northern Ireland is missing thousands.
It's time to call time on this crisis.
#safestaffingsaveslives

Health workers across different unions are announcing ballots in favour of strike action in the North and across the UK. Workers include nurses, ambulance workers, hospital porters, clerical staff, cleaners, caterers, technicians, care workers, social workers and transport workers. As we go to press NIPSA health workers are voting to take strike action and action short of a strike over pay, unsafe staffing levels and travel reimbursement rates. Hundreds of health workers who are members of the GMB have already voted - with 86% in favour of strike action. Unison NHS members across the UK are being balloted. Royal College of Nursing announced a historic vote in favour of strike action across the UK. A first in the RCN's 106 year history! Nurses will be out on strike at every NHS Trust and employer in Northern Ireland. Despite anti-union turn-out thresholds applying in Britain the vote in favour of striking was solid across all the NHS employers in Scotland. In Wales it is a yes for strike action in all but one health board. In England despite a greater number not meeting the threshold many of England's biggest hospitals will none-the-less see nurses out on strike.

The decreasing value of workers pay and what NIPSA officials refer to as 'unrealistic' pay rises for health workers certainly does leave them feeling 'underpaid, undervalued and unsupported'. Staffing levels have been dangerously low for some time. We would like to join those who are encouraging health workers to continue to vote for strike action. More than this we would encourage striking workers to empower themselves further and take control of such action directly in order to combat any potential climb down by their supposed 'leaders'. Better still lets build for unity of struggle and unity of action - general strike now!

Housing Executive Workers On Strike for 13+ Weeks!

With their strike entering it's 13th week NIHE workers are still standing strong against a derisory 1.75% pay rise.

Made in the midst of near unprecedented soaring costs and profits this is a de facto pay cut that they refuse to accept. Bosses refusal to budge on the workers demands have to date left 4,000 tenants without needed housing improvements and almost 400 houses left empty as a result. Action has forced an offer to 'engage directly' with the union from the new head of the NIHE Nicole Lappin.

As the strikers go beyond their 13th week of strike action they need to remain solid, keep up the pressure and force the NIHE to back these long time coming promises with an above inflation pay offer.

Meanwhile... in Ballymena

Our wee toon always used to get the reputation of being stuck in the seventeenth century, a bastion of evangelical Protestant fundamentalism. Imagine my surprise when I picked up the Ballymena Guardian the other day and looking at me from the front page was a fucking monk and a story about the visit to a local Catholic church of the blood-spattered 'relics' of Padre Pio. His oul' cloak, sweaty handkerchief and bloodied scabs will be on show for the faithful to view. Fuck the Pope!

Get Involved: Help Build An Anarchist Alternative.

Organise! is an anarchist political group in Ireland who take inspiration from the self directed struggles of working-class people, particularly those organised on anarcho-syndicalist lines. Our history goes back to the original formation of Organise! by the Ballymena and Antrim Anarchist Groups in 1985.

We are a small, but growing, group of ordinary working class people who are fed up with being fucked about by the profit system, fed up with seeing our communities and workplaces torn apart by racism, patriarchy, nationalism and sectarianism, and sick of a greedy few getting rich off everyone else's backs.

We are actively working to promote solidarity in opposition to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and all other forms of oppression and hierarchy. The way we organise reflects the free society we want to create: one based on voluntary association, democratic participation and self-management.

Our members are workers, claimants, students, migrants, unemployed and other working-class people committed to building a libertarian communist union movement actively opposed to all forms of oppression and exploitation.

We want to improve everyday conditions for ourselves and other working class people, but we also struggle for the revolutionary transformation that can create a free and equal society, one based on mutual aid and co-operation. Sound crazy? Maybe it does, but in an era in which it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism the continuation of the present system is even crazier…

The current system isn't working – ill-health, stress and overwork affect more and more people while others are flung on the dole; for increasing amounts of workers it is precarity, zero hours contracts and the stress of being unable to plan or budget our lives; we live in a world of plentiful resources yet millions starve; some people make vast fortunes just because they own companies, land, property or natural resources, but those of us who create the wealth, work the land and build the properties are left struggling to survive; politicians tell us there's no money – not for wages, benefits or local amenities, but there's always plenty for war; both locally and globally the gap between the richest and the poorest sections of society has never been so great; instead of a war on poverty they've got a war on 'benefit fraud', while the same system that creates war, poverty and environmental destruction stigmatises, imprisons and deports the resultant refugees.

We don't think these things are inevitable or coincidental, we think they are related to capitalism – an economic system defined by wage slavery and the accumulation of profit out of other people's work. So we support all workers against their bosses in demanding higher wages and better conditions. We try to intervene practically to support workers engaged in disputes and are also active in our own workplaces and communities. Not only against exploitation but against the multiple oppressions faced by members of the working class in all our diversity.

But it's not just a question of trying to struggle by in a world of exploitation and oppression; we look to a future where workers control production and society in their own interests. And unlike some people who claim to oppose capitalism, we don't want to be a new set of leaders and we refuse to be led by anyone else. We advocate direct democracy in the workplace and through the commune in our communities – working in federation to ensure that the needs of all are met and that no-one is ever again in a position to oppress or exploit another human being.

If you are interested in these ideas, we'd encourage you to explore our website and consider getting involved.

We currently have members in Belfast, Cork, Derry, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Portadown and are building the organisation on the basis of active involvement and participation. We aren't interested in meaningless 'paper' membership so you can't join by filling in an online form and bunging us a few quid.

To talk to us about joining get the ball rolling, check out our website at https://organiseanarchistsireland.com and send an email to:

organiseasi@gmail.com